



STRENGTHENING CAPACITY TO MONITOR TRAINING AND LICENSURE OF NURSES AND MIDWIVES: THE MALAWI EXPERIENCE

Malawi Country Statistics*:

Total Population:
9.93 million

Maternal Mortality:
Rate: 1,120/100,000

Total Fertility Rate:
6.3

**Modern Contraceptive
Prevalence:**
(All women of reproductive age)
21.5%

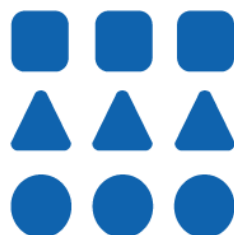
Adult HIV/AIDS Rate:
15%

*Sources: Population from
1998 Malawi Census and
HIV/AIDS rate from UNAIDS
2002; all other statistics from
DHS 2000.

An electronic nursing registry (ENR) with the capacity to monitor nurse and midwife registration, licensure, and deployment is now in place within the Registration Section of the Nurses and Midwives Council of Malawi (NMCN), a regulatory body charged with overseeing nursing and midwifery education, professional practice, and conduct. Senior NMCN staff have been trained to use the ENR, and this system is now used in the Council's everyday work. The database currently contains records of 6,223 nurses and midwives, and enables the NMCN to routinely and systematically collect information and generate over 14 different reports essential to human resource planning and development.

The ENR was initiated by the NMCN in 2001 and developed in partnership with JHPIEGO's Training in Reproductive Health (TRH) Project. The registry was created to respond to the NMCN's need to efficiently monitor how many nurses and midwives are currently registered, how many of these nurses have renewed their licenses, and where nurses and midwives are deployed both within Malawi and outside of the country. It also aids the NMCN in projecting the inservice training needs of nurses and midwives and establishing a re-certification process, including continuing education requirements. Continuing education requirements will focus on improving family planning reproductive health (FP/RH) knowledge and skills, among other targets. Information provided through reports generated by the ENR offers a platform for strategic discussions aimed at reviewing and revising human resource policies and enhancing capacity building systems. For example, NMCN staff can now identify the number of nurses who have recently died. This information may eventually be used to determine the impact of HIV/AIDS on the nursing population and assist in the development of policies and training programs. These policies and programs will help nurses protect themselves against the spread of HIV, and lessen attrition and increase nursing school enrollment by reducing the fear of becoming infected with HIV through working in the nursing profession.

Originally, nursing records were kept in a paper-based card catalog system, which did not allow the NMCN to efficiently use the information it contained. Now that the nursing registry is computerized, NMCN staff can quickly gather a variety of information on nurses and midwives, such as current employer and location, preservice institution and graduation date, and licensure status. This information is used to enhance programs targeted toward this audience and ultimately improve the availability of high quality health care, including FP/RH services. For instance, the NMCN uses the ENR to identify how many nurses apply for validations to work outside of the country every year. This information is helpful because it provides a measure of how many nurses leave Malawi annually, and assists the NMCN in identifying causes of this attrition and in developing programs to help retain nurses and midwives practicing in Malawi.



The NMCM now has plans to collaborate with the Ministry of Health and the Christian Health Association of Malawi to use ENR-generated information to develop a national system to retain nurses currently in service, identify efficient mechanisms for them to maintain their licenses, and help ensure they are properly deployed. It is anticipated that this database will also eventually be linked to a training information monitoring system (TIMS®). This linkage will complement broader national health sector information systems and provide key stakeholders with the information necessary to make informed decisions about overall training needs, deployment, and other key human resource issues.

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